How to Prepare to Homeschool Your Children

Three Methods: Gathering Information and Resources | Choosing Curricula | Setting Up a Daily Routine

Homeschooling can be an immensely rewarding experience for both the parents and the children. However, it can be difficult to know just where to start. Before your home schooling adventure begins, it is important to educate yourself about the rules for home schooling in your state as well as about home schooling in general. Then, you can explore your options for curriculum and begin to plan out your daily home school routine. With some careful planning, you can help to ensure that you will be providing your child or children with the best possible home education.

Method 1 Gathering Information and Resources

1 **Familiarize yourself with the educational requirements and laws in your state.** Requirements and laws regarding home education vary widely from state to state. Therefore, it is important to familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations that you will have to follow to educate your child at home. You can ask about these rules and regulations at a local public school in your area or visit your state's education department website and look for information on homeschooling. Some of the things that you might be required to do to comply with these rules and regulations include:[1]

- Filing a notice of intent. This is a document that some states require you to file every year. It includes a description of your curriculum and information about your qualifications to home school your child. These qualifications may include special credentials or just a high school diploma.[2]
- Registering with an umbrella school. Some states require that you register to home school your child through a local school. This may be a local public school or a private religious school if you plan to include religious materials, such as Bible stories, in the curriculum.[3]
- Submitting grades and/or an academic progress report every year. In some states, you are also required to submit your child’s grades and/or a report of your child’s academic progress. Check your state guidelines to determine if you will be required to do this.

2 **Talk with other parents.** Talking with other parents who homeschool their children can be an excellent way to find out how to get started. You can also ask questions and learn from what other parents have found to be helpful. [4]

- Try joining an online homeschooling forum if you do not know anyone who homeschools. These forums can also be valuable sources of support if you run into a question or problem while homeschooling your child.
- Some questions you might ask other parents include, "What do I need to do to register my child for home education?" "What are some good resources for lesson plans?" and "How do you keep your kids on task during school hours?"

3 **Identify the approach you want to use.** There are many different approaches to homeschooling to choose from so take your time to read about each method and find out what method or combination of methods might work best for your child.[5] Some methods that you might consider include:[6]

- Classical Method. This approach includes an emphasis on rhetoric, grammar, dialectic, logic, and Greek and/or Latin language.
- Charlotte Mason. This approach to home education emphasizes literature over academic readers as well as nature study, narration, dictation, and short lessons.
- Delayed Academics. This approach allows the child to hold off on formal educational studies until the age of 8 or 10. Then, the child may choose what to study based on his or her interests and the parent would develop a curriculum based on those interests.
- Unit Study Method. For this approach, you would need to select or design units that will teach your child about a concept or skill. The units usually build on one another and are taught in a sequence.
- Unschooling. This method allows the child to study whatever peaks his or her interest with little to no

intervention from the parent. The method trusts that the child will seek out knowledge about things that he or she is truly interested in.

4 **Read homeschooling information and resources.** It is important to learn as much as possible about homeschooling your child before you get started. This will help to increase your knowledge and confidence so that you can design the best possible program for your child.

- Try to read as many books and articles on homeschooling as possible before you begin planning how to educate your child.
- Check out your local library. You can find a wealth of resources on homeschooling as well as materials to use for teaching by visiting your local library.

Method 2 Choosing Curricula

1 **Decide who will teach your child at home.** Many parents choose to homeschool, but not all parents provide the instruction. Other instructional options include online schools that meet through video conference, private tutors who will visit your home, or online tutors who will meet and correspond with your child on a regular basis.[7]

- Think about your lifestyle and your willingness to teach your child to determine if you want to provide instruction or if you want to hire someone to instruct your child.
- For example, if you work from home or take care of small children during the day, then it might be difficult or even impossible for you to provide instruction to one of your children as well.
- Even if you are going to do most of the teaching, you might also consider having some special guests come and talk with your kids now and then. For example, you might invite a local farmer, religious leader, or member of local politics to come to your home and talk to your kids about their profession.

2 **Look into pre-packaged curriculum materials.** Unless you have a background in education, the idea of planning curriculum can be daunting. However, there are many pre-packaged curriculum materials that you can purchase or find for free online. Look into different types of pre-packaged curriculum to see if they might work for your child.[8]

- For example, if your child has a strong interest in geology and you want to encourage that interest, then you might seek out pre-packaged curriculum that includes several lessons on that subject.
- The cost of pre-packaged curriculum varies. Some packages may include a full year of lessons and cost anywhere from $500 to $1,050.[9] However, you can find free materials from sites like Edsitement, Khan Academy, and the Free Federal Teaching Resources website.[10]

3 **Design your own curriculum.** If you have a background in education or you are knowledgeable about designing curriculum, then you may consider designing your child's curriculum yourself. You can use online resources to help you determine what to include in a lesson plan or use textbooks to help guide what you teach your child.[11]

- Try basing your lessons on pre-packaged lesson plans to help you get the hang of designing curriculum. For example, you might use a pre-packaged math lesson on subtraction to help you design a lesson that focuses on a multiplication.
- You can also combine pre-packaged lesson plans with lessons that you design yourself. For example, you might use 50% pre-packaged plans and 50% plans that you designed on your own.

4 **Use trial and error to find what works best for your child.** You may already have a good idea about how your child learns and what works best for your child. Maybe he or she is a visual learner and needs to see pictures and videos to understand something. Or perhaps your child has a kinesthetic learning style and he or she has to have a hands on experience with a concept to grasp it. Just keep in mind that what works for someone else's child may not work for your child. Be open and willing to change the program if something is not working for your child.[12]

- For example, you might have a friend whose child really loves a specific type of lesson plan or activity, but your child might not respond in the same way. Keep careful notes on what works and what does not work for your child.

Method 3 Setting Up a Daily Routine

1 **Keep your family's regular routine in mind.** It is important to make sure that you child's school routine will mesh well with your family's normal daily routine. Before you set up a daily school routine for your child, think about what your normal daily routine already looks like.[13]

- Examine your normal daily routine to figure out how much time you have available to homeschool your children. Then, work within this amount of time.[14] For example, if you find that you have four hours of time free each day, then this is the amount of time that you will have to homeschool your children.
- It is also a good idea to maintain your regular daily tasks in your schedule to help structure your days, such as getting dressed in the morning, running errands on a specific day, or preparing meals at a certain time.

2 **Determine when school will begin and end.** Setting a time boundary is important when you are homeschooling because this will help to prevent you from working too long or starting too late. Try to set a daily start time and identify the days of the week that will be "school" days.

- For example, you might decide to start school at 9am every day and end school at 3pm every day.
- Make sure that you make your kids aware of these start and end times, such as by posting them somewhere visible.

3 **Schedule tasks in 15 minute blocks.** It can be hard for kids to focus on one task for too long, so you might want to schedule tasks in 15 minute blocks. If your child ends up needing less time to complete a task, then that is fine. Just try to avoid scheduling tasks that might take more than 15 minutes to complete. [15]

- For example, you might schedule a short reading or a worksheet for one 15 minute block. However, scheduling an entire book chapter, or a packet of worksheets would be too much for 15 minutes.

4 **Include meal and break times on the schedule.** Including meal and break times on the schedule is also important to maintain structure in your child's environment. Make sure that you include snack times, meal times, and other important breaks on the schedule.[16]

- For example, you might schedule in a snack from 10 to 10:15am and then schedule lunch for 12:30 to 1:30pm.

5 **Put the schedule somewhere visible.** To ensure that your kids can always find out what tasks they should be working on at a given time, post the schedule somewhere that is easy for them to access, such as on the kitchen table or on the refrigerator.

- You might even want to take a few minutes each day to review the schedule with your kids and make sure that they know what tasks they will be working on and when they will be working on those tasks.

Sources and Citations

1. http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/homeschooling/homeschooling-tips-for-getting-started/
2. http://vahomeschoolers.org/guide/home-instruction/noi/
3. http://smhea.org/new-homeschool-placeholder/beginning-homeschooling-guide/

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